

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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R 061415Z AUG 75

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 462

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 10640

FOLLOWING REPEAT BOMBAY 1969 SENT ACTION NEW DELHI

INFO CALCUTTA/MADRAS DTD 06 AUG 75

QUOTE:

BOMBAY 1969

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PINT IN

SUBJ: POLITICAL SITUATION WESTERN INDIA

1. AS FAR AS WE CAN TELL FROM OUR VANTAGE POINT HERE, MRS GANDHI CAN PRETTY WELL WRITE HER OWN TICKET AS FAR AS THE RESTRUCTURING OF INDIA'S POLITICAL SYSTEM IS CONCERNED AND NEED HAVE LITTLE FEAR OF A BACKLASH. POPULAR SUPPORT FOR THE OPPOSITION MOVEMENT JUST ISN'T IN EVIDENCE AND AS TIME PASSES ITS EFFORTS ARE LIKELY DWINDLE FURTHER. FROM ALL INDICATIONS, MRS GANDHI HAS SUCCEEDED IN IMPRESSING THE LOWER STRATA OF SOCIETY AND THE UPPER STRATA FOR THE MOSTHVART ARE PLEASED. IT IS THE MIDDLE-CLASS INTELLECTUAL WHO IS UNHAPPY OVER THE PASSING OF DEMOCRACY, FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS, ETC., BUT FEW OF THEM APPEAR TO WISH TO BE MARTYRS. PEOPLE IT SEEMS ARE JUST NOT WILLING TO ENGAGE IN A RESISTANCE MOVEMENT OR TO RISK ARREST. FEAR OF ARREST, MOREOVER, INHIBITS FROM DISCUSSING POLITICS EXCEPT UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES THEY FEEL ARE SECURE.

2. WE GATHER FROM OPPOSITION SOURCES THAT THEY ARE CONFRONTED

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WITH A DILEMMA AND ARE WELL AWARE THAT POPULAR SUPPORT IS

LACKING. THE WORD FROM THE NATIONAL SECRETARY OF THE LOK SANG-HARSH SAMITI, NANA DESHMUKH, IS THAT IT WILL BE "A LONG-DROWN BATTLE" AND PLANNING IS BEING DEVELOPED ON THIS BASIS. IN MSPARASHTRA AT LEAST, NO SPECIFIC ACTIONS ARE FORECAST AFTER THE FLAG-RAISING CEREMONIES ON AUG 15. AS AN EXAMPLE OF OPPOSITION FORTUNES, BOMBAY'S UNDERGROUND PRINTED NEWSPAPER "LOK-SANGHARSHA" APPEARED ONLY ONCE - JULY 20 - AND THERE HAVE BEEN NO FURTHER ISSUES. WE FINALLY OBTAINED COPY OF JULY 20 ISSUE WHICH WE LEARNED WAS MADE UP IN BOMBAY BUT PRINTED IN SURAT SINCE NO PRESS IN BOMBAY WOULD TAKE RISK. DIFFICULTY OF TRANSPORTING PAPERS TO BOMBAY GIVEN TIGHT POLICE SURVEILLANCE PRECLUDES FURTHER ISSUES. (THERE IS NOTHING NEW OR OF SIGNIFICANCE IN JULY 20 ISSUE).

3. WE ARE TOLD THAT THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS IN THE GOM HAS BEEN SPEEDED UP. PEOPLE IN THE SEKKRETARIAT ARE OBSERVING HOURS AND STICKING TO BUSINESS - NO MORE LONG TEA BREAKS AND LOITERING IN HALLS. ALSO CHIEF MIN CHAVAN HAS MODIFIED THE SYSTEM OF HANDLING FILES. RATHER THAN HAVE THEM COME FROM THE BOTTOM UP, WE ARE TOLD THAT HE NOW GIVES THE FILES TO THE SENIOR OFFICIALS CONCERNED WHO IN TURN CALL IN RELEVANT SUBORDINATES FOR CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION.

4. OPPOSITION MLA'S CONTINUE TO BOYCOTT THE MAHARASHTRA ASSEMBLY WHICH IS CONCERNED WITH ROUTINE BUSINESS THESE DAYS. ONE JANA SANGH MLA HAS SEEN THE LIGHT AND RESIGNED FROM THE PARTY AND WE EXPECT THIS SORT OF THING TO GAIN MOMENTUM AS POLITICIANS INCREASINGLY CONCLUDE THAT THERE JUST NOT MUCH

MILEAGE OR FUTURE IN BEING IDENTIFIED WITH THE OPPOSITION.

5. RAJYA SABHA ELECTIONS WILL TAKE PLACE IN GUJARAT ON 8TH AND WE EXPECT JANATA FRONT TO TAKE TWO OF THE THREE SEATS (CONGRESS-O AND KMLP) AND RULING CONGRESS THE OTHER.

6. WE ARE TOLD THAT ACHARYA KRIPLANI WHO IS IN AHMEDABAD AND WHO ADDRESSED PUBLIC MEETING IN AHMEDABAD ON JULY 26 TOGETHER WITH CHIEF MIN PATEL, IS THINKING OF GOING ABROAD AND TO CARRY OPPOSITION MESSAGE TO WESTERN COUNTRIES. HE IS AFRAID TO LEAVE GUJARAT FOR FEAR OF ARREST.

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7. WE ARE ALSO TOLD THAT OLD CONGRESS RANKS IN GUJARAT ARE SPLIT BETWEEN THOSE WHO DON'T WANT TO DO ANYTHING TO PROVIDE OPENING FOR MRS GANDHI TO SUSPEND JANATA FRONT GOVT AND THOSE WHO WANT GUJARAT TO BE DCENTER FOR A NATIONWIDE UPSURGE.
BANE

UNQUOTE.

SAXBE

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